



News from

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For Immediate Release
April 16, 2010

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Lipinski Rebukes Census for Hurting American Workers by Buying Imports

Today, Congressman Dan Lipinski (IL-3) issued the following statement on recent reports that the Census is purchasing promotional material manufactured overseas:

“The Census has some explaining to do, and so far it’s not providing much clarity. Our government should be complying not just with the letter but with the spirit of the Buy American Act. That’s especially true right now, in the middle of the worst economy in decades with 15 million Americans out of work. Blaming subcontractors or claiming the purchases are too small to matter isn’t going to cut it. American taxpayers are spending over \$14 billion to pay for the census, including hundreds of millions on this communications campaign. If nothing else, the Census could write Buy American rules into its contracts with private vendors. While the Census claims it was trying to save money, it doesn’t save us any money to destroy American jobs by purchasing from foreign companies.”

Congressman Lipinski also sent the letter below to the Census Bureau objecting to its purchase of products made outside the United States. Congressman Lipinski has been a leader in Congress fighting to enforce existing Buy American rules and close loopholes that make it too easy for the federal government to purchase foreign-made products. For instance, he recently introduced the Buy American Improvement Act, H.R. 4351, to ensure that taxpayer money is used to purchase American-made products and support American jobs whenever possible. This legislation would specifically prohibit the practice of “segmenting” purchases --- dividing one large purchase up into many smaller purchases --- which is what the Census appears to be using to avoid Buy American requirements.

Text of the letter follows:

April 14, 2010

Dr. Robert Groves
Director, U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Dr. Groves:

I am concerned about reports that the Census Bureau has been using taxpayer funds to procure products manufactured abroad, in violation of the Buy American Act.

Michael Sneed of the Chicago Sun-Times reported on April 13th, 2010 that Alderman Ed Burke of Chicago's 14th Ward received Census materials manufactured in China, Bangladesh, and Haiti. As I hope you are aware, the Buy American Act of 1933 (41 U.S.C. §§ 10a through 10d) requires federal agencies to procure products from domestic sources. Moreover, it explicitly stipulates that manufactured goods need to be *made in the United States* --- not simply purchased from a domestic supplier.

It is thus disturbing to hear spokespeople for the Census implying that products purchased from US companies but manufactured abroad are in compliance with federal procurement rules. Specifically, Stephen Buckner is reported in ABC News as giving this factually incorrect information in regard to promotional Census materials. The article states: "The items were purchased in compliance with the Buy America Act or federal procurement rules... While a hat or a t-shirt may have been manufactured in a foreign country such as China, the Census bought it from a US company."

Not only are these actions in contradiction to the spirit and letter of the law, they are also an affront to the plight of each and every American suffering from unemployment in the current recession. At a time of an economic downturn of historic proportions, the federal government must demonstrate a clear and forceful commitment to domestic job creation. However, the Census Bureau's apparent disregard for the Buy American Act sends exactly the opposite message to the American public and undermines trust in our government's priorities.

I urge the Census Bureau to reexamine its procurement processes and to take steps to ensure that products purchased directly or indirectly by the Bureau are manufactured within the United States. The Buy American Act of 1933 exists for a reason. While it is possible to obtain a waiver from these requirements, our government should do everything it can to comply with the letter and the intent of the law. I firmly believe American manufacturers can compete with anyone if given a chance, and I urge you to give them that chance.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to this vital issue. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely



Daniel Lipinski
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cc: Gary Locke, Secretary, Department of Commerce

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